

## **Disabilities Concerns Subcommittee — Interim 2011 Report**

The Disabilities Concerns Subcommittee (DCS) of the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee held two meetings this interim: on June 24 and October 7. At each meeting, the DCS received testimony from state agencies, community advocates and the public on issues affecting individuals living with disabilities.

The June 24 meeting was a special meeting of the DCS in response to calls by advocates for a meeting to review changes to the developmental disabilities home- and community-based Medicaid waiver (D/D waiver) program. The DCS heard about plans that the Department of Health and the Human Services Department (HSD), the agencies responsible for administering the D/D waiver, have included in their waiver renewal application to the federal government to use a new rate structure, assessment tool and other restructuring means to cut program costs and open new placement allocations (slots). The DCS expressed its concern that the legislature and the public be provided ample opportunity to comment on any proposed changes to the program and that more slots be opened to individuals on the waiting list.

At its October 7 meeting, the DCS heard testimony relating to the Coordinated Long-Term Services (CoLTS) home- and community-based Medicaid waiver program and the Personal Care Option (PCO) program for Medicaid recipients. Both programs assist people who need help with at least two activities of daily living in order to remain independent. The DCS raised concerns about continued long waiting lists for the CoLTS program, and advocates raised concerns about CoLTS allocations being made only after individuals are placed in nursing homes. The DCS and advocates urged that more individuals be moved from nursing home situations and new slots be opened up. The HSD testified that it is attempting to cut costs through increased integration of services in Medicaid restructuring, through community reintegration and through federal "money follows the person" grants. "Community reintegration" was distinguished from "money follows the person" in that the latter program opens new slots for CoLTS participants while community reintegration does not, but it only moves individuals from nursing homes into the community.

The DCS also heard testimony on business and self-advocacy opportunities for individuals living with disabilities. It discussed ways that individuals living with disabilities can be empowered to move from financial and social dependence on the state and family members to greater independence through self-advocacy, self-employment and skill-building. The Governor's Commission on Disability discussed its attempts to obtain more funding for disabilities programs in the state. The DCS endorsed the concept that advocates put forward to fund five business incubator loans for individuals with developmental disabilities.